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ABSTRACT

To cope with the bilingual education problems in a community such as Rock Point on the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico, a program has been developed to teach English as a foreign language within a bilingual setting. The goal is coordinate bilingualism in which each language has a separate but equal status, and the program is a "transitional" one in which Navajo is used as a means to enable children to go to school in English. The program involves team-teaching in two languages with the English-language teacher and the Navajo-language teacher conducting activities at opposite ends of the classroom simultaneously, each working with a relatively small group at a time. In the structure recommended for this program, the Navajo-language teachers are in charge and, in the lower grades especially, they teach content. The English-language teacher is teaching a foreign language, and teaching content is second to teaching English. The English teacher's goal is to make it possible for Navajo children to cope successfully with education in English. (VM)

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BILAGÁANA BIZAAD: E{S/F}L in a Navajo Bilingual Setting

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at New Orleans
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BILAGÁANA BIZAAD:[1] E{S/F}L in a Navajo Bilingual Setting

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[1] In Navajo, 'the Anglo / his speech', i.e., 'the English language'.

The Navajo Reservation is comparable in size to the entire state of West Virginia. Most of the c. 130,000 Navajos on the Reservation speak Navajo. The largest percentage and the largest number of non-English-speaking Indians are found on the Navajo Reservation. The number of Navajo speakers actually continues to increase. There are on the Reservation any number of communities like Rock Point which are a hundred miles or more from the nearest non-Navajo centers of population---towns in excess of 10,000 population, say. In such communities, the 'Rock Points' of the Reservation, Navajo is <u>the</u> language of wider communication. One can, in such communities, satisfy almost all one's needs in Navajo. Navajo interpreters, or semi-bilingual Anglos, can be found or recruited in those non-Navajo institutions of the community: the mission, the clinic, the trading post, and the school. And this same situation is also found in a number of the institutions in the Reservation-peripheral non-Navajo towns with which community people have most frequent contact. Even in the school, an essentially non-Navajo institution, Navajo is <u>the</u> language of wider communication.[2] Most of the staff-members are Navajo and Navajo-

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[2] An extensive survey of the teacher-perceived language abilities of six-year-old Navajo children entering school in schoolyear 1970-71 indicated that only about 1% or the children entering BIA schools and about 3% of the children entering public schools were considered to be English monolinguals; only about 10% of the children entering BIA schools were considered to be English-dominant; about 20% of the children entering public schools were considered to be English-dominant. From Spolsky and Holm (forthcoming).

speaking. Navajo is the language spoken by the children on the buses, in the dormitories, and in the dining room. Navajo is spoken by the children before, during, and after classes. Indeed, although there are individual and domain exceptions (both of which seem to be on the increasse) the only place one consistently hears students speaking English is in response to their non-Navajo speaking teachers.[3] Such teachers,

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[3] Similar observations of Sioux schools are made by Wax, Wax, and Dumont (1964) and of Oklahoma Cherokee schools by Dumont and Wax (1969). There are, I think, some differences in the Rock Point situation. At this time, and in a community elementary school, it's my impression that the children talk to one another mostly (but not entirely) in Navajo more because of less conscious notions of 'ease' than of more conscious notions of 'in-group solidarity'. The latter tends to come when the children go into the public junior and senior high schools outside the community. The situation at a community elementary school probably reflects the greater insulation from Anglo society: - i.e., the children just do not feel as threatened.

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then, despite whatever feelings they may have of participation in a 'psychological majority' are, at the school and community level, a rather small linguistic minority.

The situation I'm describing is, if you are familiar with the typology of William Mackey, the one he diagrams as in Fig. 1. Here the language

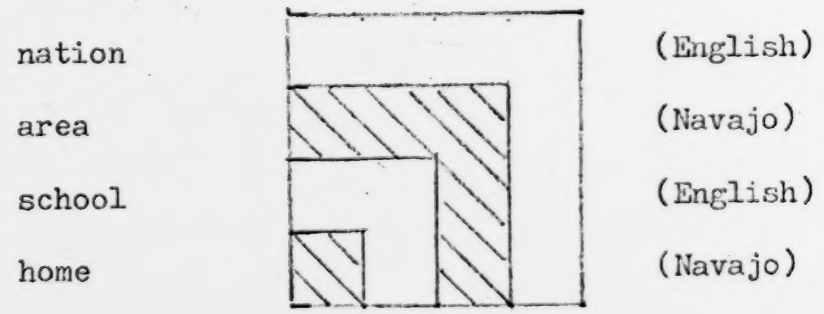

Figure 1.

of the home (Navajo) <u>is</u> that of the immediate area (the Rock Point communi-

ty but not that of formal instruction in the school or of the nation as a whole.[4]

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[4] Mackey (1970), p. 73, no. 3

DBL SPC

In a 1963 paper, Albert Marckwardt advocated a British distinction between the then often synonomous terms "ESL" and "EFL" which seems to have laid that particular terminological controversy to rest.

> "By English as a Foreign Language they mean English taught as a school subject...solely for the purpose of giving the student a foreign language competence..."
>
> "When the term English as a Second Language is used, the reference is usually to a situation where English becomes a language of instruction in the schools..."[5]

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[5] Marckwardt (1963), p. 25

The essential distinction, if I understood it aright, was that of school language environment. An EFL situation was one in which the "foreign" language (English) was taught, and used, only during a given, relatively small, portion of the school day; the remainder of the school day was conducted in the native language of the students. (Thus, at the elementary school level, an EFL program was the mirror image of a FLES program; English was the "foreign" language.) An ESL situation was one in which the "second" language (English) was not only taught as a subject but was also used throughout the school day as a, or the, language of instruction.

Our situation on the Reservation, that of both teaching English and teaching in English, seemed to us an ESL situation. And yet, in visiting ESL programs elsewhere, we found our situation, and our program, rather unlike those we found outside the Reservation. In visiting programs for urban Chicano children we found a much higher degree of what we came to call "second language pressure" than we found on the Reservation. There was, we felt, considerably more English 'in the air': in the communities themselves, in the mass-media, in public transportation, and in the schools. There seemed to us to be considerably less such pressure on the Reservation, particularly in such communities as Rock Point.

DBL SPC

Here it may be useful to relate the ESL - EFL distinction to another sort of program distinction. We have found it useful at Rock Point to make a distinction between what we call "structural-sequential" and what we call "situational" English.[6] We see the situation of the Navajo

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[6] Willink (1968)

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child attempting to learn English at school as being quite different from the situation in which that same child learned Navajo. The same language-learning processes may be involved but the situation itself is quite different. A truly foreign language---foreign in that it is seldom heard outside the classroom---simply does not, in a classroom setting, teach itself. We assume, then, that in such a situation some attempt to present an ordered, developmental, program of English

structure, one which tends to move from simpler to more complex structure, is more likely to enable these children to learn to use English structure for their own purposes than is a program of random or topical English use. Hence the notion "structural-sequential" English.

On the other hand, in a setting such as ours, situations do unfortunately arise which require the child to understand or to produce English the child has not been taught and may not know. A child needs to go to the toilet from the first day of school on. Most teachers do not talk Navajo. One cannot very well say that since yes-no questions with modals are not introduced until, say, the second year that the child must wait until then. One gives the child the phrase needed to enable him to cope with the situation here and now. To the child the phrase may very well be an unanalyzed whole, outside of or beyond that English he has learned to date. But it works. It may be that only when he begins to learn that particular structure will the previously unanalyzed phrase become 'grist' for his own language 'mill'. "Situational" English, then, is English out of sequence. As a child progresses through a developmental program of English, he should encounter relatively less "situational" English each year.

Here it should be noted that "situational" English is not just the language of classroom control but that, particularly in the lower grades, much if not most of the language of instruction is, in effect, "situational" English. Most teachers apparently find it very difficult, particularly at the lower grade levels, to keep the language of instruction within the structural means the children have mastered to date. To the extent that the teacher fails to do so, "situational" English is

(albeit often unknowingly) involved.

The child entering such a program of education can be seen as having a dual English-language need: one, for an orderly presentation of English structure in such a way as to enable him, as efficiently as possible, to master the sentence-making machinery of English for his own purposes; the other, for a presentation of that English which will enable him to cope with the here-and-now of school life and instruction in English. In an adequate English language program for non-native speakers, both types of instruction are necessary. The 'mix' is a function of how much English, and what English, is being learned elsewhere. (From our point of view, one of the main reasons apart from language similarity, that many essentially "situational" programs succeed with urban Chicano children to the extent that they do is because considerably more English is being 'taught' outside the classroom than in. This is the "second language pressure" I referred to earlier.) In our situation, where almost all of what English is taught is taught in the classroom, we must devote considerably more time to the "structural-sequential" aspect of the program.

In terms of these two aspects or components, EFL programs can be seen as devoting more time to the "structural-sequential" component. ESL programs can be seen as a more balanced presentation of the "structural-sequential" and the "situational" components.

DBL SPC

I would now like to suggest that for communities such as the one described earlier, neither the usual ESL nor the usual EFL programs seem appropriate. Somehow, where Navajo is so strong, and English comes so slowly, we must begin to try to make use of the child's and the community's Navajo. This

is the direction in which some of us at Rock Point have been moving these past four years.

We have for some years advocated, and tried to implement, a rather intensive ESL program at Rock Point. We experimented briefly in 1965 and 1966 with a few modest Navajo-language activities but simply did not have the staff for anything more ambitious. In schoolyear 1967-68, receiving Title monies for the first time, and encouraged by the Modiano study to think that perhaps bilingual education could be justified on pragmatic grounds, we ventured rather cautiously into bilingual education.[7] In a paper given at San Antonio in 1968, I discussed some of

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[7] Modiano (1968)

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problems and possibilities of that initial venture.[8]

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[8] Holm (1968)

Ours has been perhaps a somewhat amateurish and homegrown program. Certainly, financed for only nine-months at a time with Title I (not Title VII) funds, it has been a financially precarious program.[9] With

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[9] Since this paper was written, the community School Board's Title VII proposal has been approved.. Non-public schools on the Reservations were not originally entitled to Title VII funds.

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uncertain funding, temporary personnel, and limited materials, it has been, of necessity, a "transitional" rather than a "maintenance"

program.[10] But in these last four years, the program has grown slowly

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10 Mackey (1970) makes a distinction between "transitional" programs of bilingual education where, as in our case, Navajo is used as a means to the end of enabling children to go-to-school-in-English. In a "maintenance" program, the maintenance and development of Navajo would be seen as an end in itself. In a "transitional" program, the use of Navajo as a language of instruction is phased out at some point in time; in a "maintenance" program, some such use of Navajo would be continued throughout the child's school career. While we do feel that a "maintenance" program may be more desirable, we're also aware that we're desparately short of the wherewithal for even an adequate "transitional" program. Without an established body of written material one can 'hook into' (as is the case with Spanish), anything beyond a token "maintenance" program is beyond our means at this time. It is to be hoped that successful "transitional" programs may make "maintenance" programs feasible and desirable.

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from two, to three, to five, and now six, classrooms. And the more I've seen of some of the more ambitious, but essentially imposed programs off-Reservation, the more I think there is to be said for the 'home-growing' of programs.

DBL SPC

If there <u>is</u> any reality to Ervin-Tripp's earlier notions of "compound" and "coordinate" bilingualism, then we feel we're more likely to enable the children to achieve something like "coordinate" bilingualism by separating the language stimuli---by striving for a measure of excellence in both languages but, at least at the lower grades, separately.[11] In practice, this has meant having <u>two</u> teachers in the

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11 Ervin and Osgood (1954), pp. 139-142. There has been considerable discussion in the literature as to the reality of these constructs. Macnamara (1970) sums up his thinking on the controversey:

> "...I do not believe that there is any evidence that there are at least two different sorts of bilinguals, coordinate and compound, at least as these have been described in the literature... I want to add one other disclaimer to these: I am not sure that the pair of concepts which are disassociated...are essentially unrelated. In other words, I am not even sure that any negatavism is justified." (p. 36)

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bilingual classrooms: an English-language teacher and a Navajo-language teacher, hereafter referred to as the EL and the NL teacher respectively. The two share responsibility for the children in that room: they might be thought of as 'team-teaching in two languages'. The two teachers plan together, quite closely. But, once the children have arrived in the classroom, the two teachers teach separately but 'parallel-ly'. They attempt to avoid translation. Inasfar as is reasonable, the NL teacher talks to the children only in Navajo and the EL teacher only in English.

The school is on a modified Saratoga split-schedule which allows, in the lower grades, four half-hours when only half of the children are present. The bilingual classrooms are laid out in such a way that the two teachers conduct activities at opposite ends of the rooms simultaneously. The children sit in the middle to do independent work and go to one or the other ends of the room for group activities. Most activities involve half-class (12-15 children) or quarter class (6-8 children) groups; few activities last longer than half an hour.

The NL teacher puts major emphahsis on reading or reading-readiness (for initial literacy in Navajo) and on mathematics-and-logic. Social studies and science, to the extent that activities are drawn from these areas, are taught in Navajo. The EL teacher puts major emphasis on

the teaching of English as a foreign language and on mathematics-and-logic. All concepts in mathematics-and-logic are first developed in Navajo; extensive use of manipulative materials is made in both the Navajo- and the English-language mathematics-and-logic activities.

DBL SPC

No millenium has arrived. Classes still average 30. Materials are scarce or non-existent; most of the materials are being put together locally at night and on weekends. And one could say that our NL teachers are but Classroom Aides by another name. Most of them are but high-school graduates. But they are called, and, more importantly, are functioning as, teachers. And, as teachers, they are probably more effective than all but a handful of non-Navajo teachers teaching at the same levels elsewhere. Our thesis, bluntly put, is that it is easier to learn education than it is to learn Navajo. It is easier for alert and concerned high-school graduates who already know Navajo to learn something of the relatively little we really know about the teaching of initial reading and mathematics than it is for college-trained non-Navajos to learn Navajo. Easier; not easy.

There are real problems. Planning is difficult: EL teachers often don't know enough about Navajo nor NL teachers about curriculum. There are personal and situational problems. EL teachers can feel quite threatened by some 'little slip of a girl' who has better control of, and communication with, the children than she does. NL teachers can feel quite 'put down' by an EL teacher who, despite her relatively recent arrival and her difficulties in understanding or communicating with the children, draws considerably more money than she (the NL teacher)

does. True team-teaching and shared responsibility require not only considerable ability and stamina but also mutual trust. Training is also a problem. No NL teacher was ever taught by a NL teacher when he or she was a child. Nor has the NL teacher received any training in how to teach in Navajo. He or she must learn from, and with, others who are still exploring the role. Terminology is another problem. Considerable discussion is required to reach concensus on basic terms. Sometimes time is inadequate and no such concensus is arrived at. And materials are a problem. There are some early reading materials available. Almost everything else must be adapted or made locally.

DBL SPC

This is not the way we would wish things to be. We would like to see true team teaching with equally well-trained teachers. And there are some hopes that this might, in time, come about. One of our most promising NL teachers has gone on to college; others are taking summer courses or workshops and/or are taking part in a new Career Opportunity Program. But a cadre of local, college-trained Navajo-language teachers is still somewhere in the future.

But perhaps it is just here, if nowhere else, that this program might suggest a solution for other areas where college-trained native-speakers are not available or are not available in sufficient numbers. If one of the primary purposes of a "transitional" bilingual educational program is to 'talk education to the children in their own language', then is it necessary to wait until there are college-trained native-speakers to do so? I am not saying that anyone who talks the language can teach in it. I think I am more aware than most that this is not

the case. Nor am I saying that partially trained native speakers should be used in place of college-trained native-speakers. What I am trying to say is that reasonably sensitive native-speakers, with reasonably good on-the-job assistance, may very well do a far better job of reaching the children, personally and academically, than all but a handful of college trained teachers who do not speak the children's language---at least at the lower grades.

DBL SPC

Such a program, with all of its self-admitted difficulties, offers a great deal of hope. We have done relatively little even semi-formal testing. Due to lags in funding, the program has not run long enough continuously to allow us to assess the results formally. What semi-formal testing has been done by Dr. Willink and others seems extremely promising.

One area of achievement should be of particular interest here. It's our very distinct impression that the children are learning more English than ever before. This may seem at first a bit paradoxical: the children seem to be doing better in English despite spending only half as much time in English-language activities. But perhaps not so paradoxical. First, there's the matter of attention. Most of us have had the experience of listening, on the radio say, to a language we only partially understand. After awhile, and perhaps even despite our best efforts, we realize we've been hearing only 'static' for some time. It is as if we had some sort of 'circuit-breaker' to protect us from an 'overload' of novelty. One's system simply 'cuts out' in self-defense. I can't help feeling that something very like this must

happen to many young Navajo children much of the time in an English-only classroom situation. It may well be that in the coordinate bilingual classroom, with its relatively short periods of English-language activity, interspersed with periods of independent and Navajo-language activity, less English may be being 'sent'---but that considerably more of what is being 'sent' is being 'received'. Second, there's the matter of participation. In situations where only half- or quarter-class groups are being taught, the teacher may be able to know and to challenge the children, to pace a lesson so as to keep the group's interest and attention, to be more flexible in her responses to the children, and to allow or require more participation by the children. Third, there's the matter of preparation. A teacher who's teaching only EFL and mathematics-and-logic in that English the children have been taught to date should be better prepared than one who attempts to teach all things to all children. Assuming that she is supposed to use only that English the children already know, she is more likely to be able to do so than one who may be talking over the children's heads in a foreign language most of the day and who after awhile begins to assume that this is a 'normal' state of affairs. So... perhaps the apparent paradox---that the children may be learning more English in a coordinate bilingual setting than they did in a reasonably good English-only setting---is not so paradoxical after all.

DBL SPC

Such a program is not meant to 'teach in Navajo instead of teaching English!. Even in the more remote communities of the Reservation, twentieth (and twenty-first) century America is, perhaps unfortunately,

inescapable. Most parents insist on 'good' English programs. Rock Point's children will have to know English and know it well if only to cope. We would wish to see them acquire excellence in both languages. But, for the time being at least, we see only the means for "transitional" bilingual educational programs. Such a program hopes to teach English more successfully by delaying the transition to reading-in-English. Such a program hopes that, while teaching English, we can at the same time, begin to get at teaching 'how to learn' in Navajo. This is perhaps one of the most exciting aspects about such a program. Navajo-language instruction, at its worst, can be a caricature (as it might well be) of some of the poorer English-language instruction this Reservation has seen. (We all tend to teach as we were taught.) But, at its best, Navajo-language instruction is something altogether different. One sees children and teacher working together in the very mature, very workmanlike, very Navajo manner one often sees in good Navajo homes---but relatively seldom in English-only classrooms. This, with the increased possibilities of parental participation in the child's education, offers very real hope for Navajo education.

DBL SPC

(There have been of late several papers seriously questioning the presumed advantages of initial literacy in the vernacular---a key component in most bilingual programs. Venezky shows that no existing bilingual project has shown "demonstrably superior results".[12] Wilson

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[12] Venezky (1970)

seriously questions any easy notions of "transfer".[13] In response to

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[13] Wilson (1970)

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the one (Venezky) I think that one can say that for those three projects he cites for which test data is available, these same tests could also be interpreted to say that the experimental groups have done at least as well as the control groups in the state language---and that they have learned more in other content or social areas in the vernacular. This, to me, is not an insignificant claim. In response to the other (Wilson), I can only say that we must avoid any exaggerated claims for easy or automatic transfer. In fact both papers can be taken as serious warnings that bilingual education is not "the answer". But neither is ESL alone. To me, the two papers seem to presume the existence of far more rapid and effective in-school English-language-learning programs than any I've seen. Wilson's may well be the best materials available today. But I'm not convinced that even with his materials can Navajo children move into English fast enough to avoid the 'learning-gap' that now occurs. Until or unless the language situation itself changes quite a bit, it would seem to me that the bilingual approach is the more reasonable of the two approaches.)

DBL SPC

We are proposing, then, not an English as a Second Language program nor an English as a Foreign Language program but a program of English as a foreign language within a bilingual setting. In such a program, the English-language teacher might play a rather different

role than she has in past English-language programs on the Reservation.

1) To begin with, the NL teacher would be in charge. If both teachers are college-trained, it would seem rather ridiculous that the one who communicates least effectively with both the children and their parents should be in charge of the classroom.

2) The EL teacher's basic responsibility would be to teach English. I.e., there would be a frank admission on everyone's part that she <u>is</u> teaching a <u>foreign</u> language. She must be better prepared to do so than are most teachers now---with education, not just some training, in the field of English-language teaching. (And as more and more of the teachers are Navajo-speakers, School Boards can be much more selective in appointing the fewer, if any, non-Navajos they want as English-language teachers. These teachers must be able to plan much more closely, and teach much more effectively, than do most teachers, who must be jacks-of-all-trades, do now.

3) To the extent that the English-language teacher does teach content in English, that instruction must be set up primarily to achieve English-language, not just content, goals. Content will be taught, at least at the lower grades, in Navajo. Again, this will require much better planning and preparation; it will also require much better awareness of, and control of, the English structure used in classroom interaction.

4) To the extent that she attempts to teach Anglo-style classroom culture---how to cope with Anglos in their own schools---the teacher will have to be much more aware of just what that culture is and what it isn't.

DBL SPC

In such a setting, the English-language teacher would be seen as a specialist in an admittedly foreign language. And, as such, he or she must renounce a number of much more extensive but more poorly defined areas of activity. She must concentrate on doing one thing and doing it well: of making it possible for Navajo children to cope successfully with education-in-English. She need not renounce 'creativity'. But 'creativity' in foreign-language activities is of a different order than that in first- or non-language activities. The English-language teacher must be 'creative' in finding ways to enable children to be 'creative' in a foreign language. That is creativity within a much smaller, and much more disciplined, compass. Good intentions are absolutely necessary. But good intentions alone will not suffice.

-Wayne Holm

Navajo Reading Study
August 1971

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